

**News from Rep. Stephanie Herseth**

**For Immediate Release**

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**HERSETH'S NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS HOME LOAN ACT PASSES COMMITTEE**

**Bill Makes Permanent a Pilot Program to Assist Native American Veterans with Housing Loans**

**October 21, 2005, Washington, D.C.** - The House Veterans' Affairs Committee yesterday approved legislation that includes language from U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth to make permanent a Native American veterans' housing loan pilot program.

Herseth said, "This program has proven to effectively help Native American veterans in South Dakota and across the country in becoming home owners. Native Americans are proud and patriotic Americans who serve their country in high numbers. At a time in our nation's history when we are asking men and women in our Armed Forces for greater sacrifices, we must make sure we keep our promises to veterans, and extend opportunity when they return from service abroad."

The Veterans Administration's Native American Home Loan program directs home loans to eligible Native American veterans who wish to purchase, construct or improve a home on tribal trust lands. Since its inception of the pilot program in 1992, the VA has made 443 direct loans to Native American veterans – including at least 17 from South Dakota. The VA direct loans are generally limited to either the cost of the home or \$80,000, depending on which is less.

Last year, Herseth passed legislation to extend the pilot program until 2008. This year's bill makes it permanent. Herseth is the Ranking Member on the Veterans' Affairs subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

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*Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.*